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For Immediate Release  
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### **Good Habits for a Healthy Holiday**

The holiday season is in full swing, and COVID-19, RSV, colds, and influenza are circulating. Parties, travel, and shopping all increase the risks of catching and spreading illness, which is why Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is encouraging everyone to cover their coughs, wash their hands well and often, and stay home if they are sick.

Coughing and sneezing into the air spreads germs to others. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people infected with a cold, flu, or COVID can spread it to others up to 6 feet away. “After you cough or sneeze, germs can stay in the air for 6 minutes or longer and may be breathed in by others. Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or clothing keeps the germs out of the air,” explains Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager for SWNPHD.

To help stop the spread of germs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and place used tissue in the trash.
- If you don't have a tissue then cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands for 20 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 70% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth as these are places where viruses and bacteria can enter your body.
- Try to avoid others that are sick.
- Stay at home if you are sick or have a fever and follow all instructions from your healthcare provider.

Staying home if you are sick may mean having to miss the annual family or work gathering, but the people you could have made sick will be happy you chose not to share your germs. While you can't avoid every germ this season, do your part in stopping the spread by covering your coughs and washing your hands for a happier and healthier holiday.

For more information contact Melissa Propp at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> (one block north of Arby's) in McCook. The website [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Also find SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

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